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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4704
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 4960
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 0683
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0641
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 0579
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 000680

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GWELZANT, L/OES FOR JROACH, OES FOR WGIBBONS-FLY
SUVA FOR REO JMURPHY
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SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH COOK ISLANDS DEPUTY PM ON MARITIME
COOPERATION

REF: WELLINGTON 419

Classified By: Consul General John Desrocher for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
) .

This message was drafted by ConGen Auckland and approved by
Embassy Wellington.

¶1. (C) During a recent visit to Auckland, Cook Islands
Deputy Prime Minister Sir Terepai Maoate, along with
Associate Minister Junior Maoate (his son) and CEO Ratu Mato,
met with the Ambassador and Auckland CG. Maoate explained
that the Cooks are anxious to expand their thin economic base
beyond fishing and tourism. The GCI is particularly
interested in finding ways to exploit what Maoate described
as vast mineral wealth under the seabed. Maoate claimed that
the sea floor of the Cooks's economic exclusion zone (nearly
700,000 square miles) held vast reserves of manganese and
other minerals potentially worth billions of dollars to the
small island nation. Maoate insisted that much of this is
recoverable with current technologies and could transform the
Cooks's economy. Maoate expressed great interest in U.S.
investment in mineral exploitation.

¶2. (C) Maoate also explained that the GCI is hamstrung in
its efforts to patrol its economic exclusion zone. The
country's lone patrol boat depends on private, island-hopping
aircraft for leads on vessels fishing illegally, vessels that
inevitably disappear long before the patrol boat can
intercept them. The Deputy PM sought U.S. help in expanding
an airfield in the Cooks to beef up patrolling.
Specifically, expanding the facilities at this airfield would
make it usable for a French government aircraft that provides
surveillance for French territories in the region. In
exchange for use of the facility, Maoate suggested, the
French would help patrol the Cooks's territorial waters.
Maoate proposed a "joint venture" with the U.S. to expand the
airstrip.

¶3. (SBU) Maoate also strongly encouraged the Ambassador to
visit the Cooks in the near future; an invitation the
Ambassador promised to take advantage of as soon as his

schedule allowed.

14. (C) Comment. Maoate seemed only superficially aware of the USG's proposed Bilateral Maritime Security Treaty (reftel). Not surprisingly, Maoate was less interested in how such an agreement would aid USG efforts to combat drug smuggling in the Caribbean than in how it might help the GCI police its own territorial waters. End comment.
MCCORMICK